



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
December 1, 2014

Dear Interested Citizens:

Thank you for your thoughtful reviews and comments on a proposal by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to purchase approximately 148 acres of wildlife habitat and add it to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area in Mineral County.

Enclosed is a decision document in which FWP explains its rationale for recommending that the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the State Board of Land Commissioners approve this transaction as proposed. Upon completion of the public involvement process, FWP accepts the draft environmental assessment (EA) as final. The decision document also summarizes all public comments on the proposed acquisition, and explains how FWP considered and incorporated these comments in formulating a recommendation.

FWP will request approval for the purchase of the subject lands at the monthly Fish & Wildlife Commission meeting scheduled for December 11, 2014, in Helena. FWP will request approval from the State Board of Land Commissioners at its regularly scheduled meeting in December, also in Helena. These meetings are open to the public, as are other regularly scheduled Commission and Land Board meetings.

Please feel free to contact me at 406-542-5500 with any questions you may have. Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Arnold', written in a cursive style.

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor

DECISION NOTICE
FWP Purchase of a 148-Acre Addition to the
Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area
December 1, 2014

Proposal

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposed to acquire a 148-acre addition to its Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area (FCWMA), through a purchase from the Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT). The property is a private inholding within the 34,573-acre FCWMA and is also bordered by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) lands.

This property was formerly owned by Plum Creek Timber Company (PCTC), and is one of several inholdings that had been sold to private buyers prior to the Nature Conservancy's acquisition of the PCTC lands in Fish Creek. The proposed addition is located immediately downstream of the Forks confluence of the South and West Forks of Fish Creek, and includes approximately 0.5-mile of Fish Creek and its associated riparian corridor (25 acres), as well as adjacent upland habitat for elk and other wildlife species. The main stem of Fish Creek is on a portion of the key migratory corridor and sub-adult rearing area for fluvial bull trout. Confluence areas of drainages are especially important for travel corridors, and these areas often support wider riparian habitats than non-confluence areas. In addition to Fish Creek, the property includes approximately ½-mile of a small unnamed creek.

Management of the property would be under the guidance of the Fish Creek WMA and Fish Creek State Park Interim Preliminary Management Plan (MFWP 2009).

Public Review Process

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of its proposed actions to the human and physical environments, evaluate those impacts through an interdisciplinary approach, including public input, and make a decision based on this information. FWP released a draft environmental assessment (EA; "FVLT Addition to Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area") for public review of this proposal on October 8, 2014 and accepted public comment until 5:00 P.M. on November 7, 2014.

Legal notices of the proposed addition and its Draft EA availability were published in the following newspapers (dates): *Independent Record* (Helena; October 8, 15), *Mineral Independent* (Plains; October 15, 22), and *Missoulian* (October 8, 15). FWP issued a statewide news release regarding this proposal on October 8, 2014.

FWP mailed 30 copies of the EA, and emailed approximately 42 notifications of the EA's availability, to adjacent landowners and interested individuals, groups and (non-FWP) agencies. The EA was available for public review and comment on FWP's web site (<http://fwp.mt.gov/>, "Public Notices") beginning October 8 through November 7, 2014.

A public hearing to explain the project, answer questions and take public comment was held in Albion on October 21 (6:30 p.m.) at the Albion Community Center.

Summary of Public Comment

FWP received 74 emailed or written comments (Appendix A), representing 63 people, 11 organizations and one agency. Individual commenters were from the following Montana towns: 24 from Missoula; 5 from Alberton; 2 each from Helena, Huson and Whitefish; one each from Billings, Bozeman, Chester, Darby, Emigrant, Hamilton, Kalispell, Stevensville, Thompson Falls, and Victor; and 16 did not indicate a town.

- Seventy commenters supported the acquisition. Of these, 4 made comments identical to commenter #49, and 5 commenters included the identical 4 points as listed in commenter #20.
- One did not support the acquisition.
- The support of 3 commenters appeared to be contingent on actions that FWP does not contemplate for this acquisition.

Also, the public hearing generated comments from 7 additional people, which were presented orally at the meeting or in writing on the comment sheets provided at the meeting (Appendix B). Of these, 3 supported the proposal and 4 opposed it.

In total, 73 individuals or organizations supported the proposal, 3 others registered conditional support with conditions that were outside the scope of this decision, and 5 opposed the proposal.

The public hearing provided a very worthwhile and constructive forum for discussion during the question-and-answer period of the evening. Opinions and issues reflected on FWP's four-year history of managing the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area and the separate Fish Creek State Park. Some people expected better maintained road surfaces, greater vehicular access, more signage, dedicated ATV trails, opportunities for firewood cutting, and a new utility corridor across the WMA to deliver power to private properties upstream. While it was generally understood and acknowledged that some of these issues did not pertain directly to the management of the proposed 148-acre addition to the WMA, they did affect some people's willingness to support more habitat acquisition.

Noxious weed occurrence, particularly spotted knapweed, was a topic of concern pertaining to the proposed addition as well as the WMA overall. A neighbor suggested that he uses biological controls to help manage noxious weeds in sensitive areas where herbicides would not be appropriate.

The question of revenues to Mineral County also came up for discussion at the public meeting, and FWP repeated that the agency does make payments to the county in the same amount as the property taxes that would be assessed to a private landowner. The concern was raised that the county could receive more tax revenue from a private landowner if the landowner developed the property. Alternatively, others opined that people visit Mineral County for its pristine landscapes and outdoor recreation opportunities on public land, and that public access of any kind to the proposed WMA addition would probably be denied under private ownership.

Regional Supervisor's recommendation on FWP's purchase of the addition to the Fish Creek WMA

This proposal for FWP to purchase the 148-acre parcel and add it to the Fish Creek WMA received overwhelming public support during the public review period. Supporters emphasized the benefits of stream protection and public access that would accrue from the purchase, and even some who opposed the proposal acknowledged that the matter of adding this relatively small parcel to the WMA was not at the heart of their concerns. Therefore, I am pleased to recommend that FWP complete this purchase and manage it as part of the Fish Creek WMA, and wish to acknowledge the funding partners, particularly Five Valleys Land Trust for their enabling role that served both FWP and the willing seller.

The conversation with the local community has been an important outcome of this process. Since acquiring the 34,573-acre Fish Creek WMA in June 2010, FWP has put tens of thousands of dollars to work on the ground toward noxious weed control and management. Roads have been repaired and maintained. Sedimentation has been reduced by storing segments of selected closed roads. The traditional open-road system has largely been maintained open to motorized vehicles. FWP has operated a check station at the mouth of Fish Creek in the past two hunting seasons to get a clear understanding of hunting patterns and observations. Numerous other management activities have been undertaken, and while much is left to be done, FWP is working hard to properly manage the Fish Creek WMA.

In the course of this latest public involvement process, FWP has learned that many of the efforts that we see as priorities and accomplishments in the management of Fish Creek WMA do not match the unmet needs seen by some local residents, and we have misunderstood each other as to what our objectives mean to FWP and how they are received by the public. We appreciate how openly people have been willing to share their observations and perceptions, and we see some opportunities before us to address needs of mutual interest. We have learned a lot in these past weeks of public engagement.

With the purchase in 2010, FWP implemented an interim management plan for Fish Creek WMA, which is in need of revision. FWP and some others particularly in Mineral County see the revision of the management plan as a path toward greater cooperation and better communication as we go forward.



Randy Arnold
Region 2 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

12-1-2014

Date

APPENDIX A. Comments on the proposed FVLT addition to Fish Creek WMA EA received by FWP during the comment period. (Comments received via E = email, M = mail.)

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment
1	E		I support this land purchase along Fish Creek by FWP
2	E		I would like to speak out in favor of the FVLT addition to the Fish Creek WMA. I live fairly close to that area and recreate there every summer. I primarily go there to fish but have also gone into that area to hike as well as look for more mushrooms. I value having public access and state management of as much of that drainage as possible.
3	E		I support the acquisition of the addition to Fish Creek WMA. I believe this would hold big benefits for wildlife, recreation and public access.
4	E		I support the Addition to Fish Creek WMA. With very few minor impacts expected, some of them positive, and all of them able to be migrated, I see no reason not to proceed with this purchase. As with most inholdings within public property, this land will sale to someone else if FWP doesn't buy it. If that would happen it's hard to say what we'd see build on it, but it certainly wouldn't be open to public access!!!!
5	E		Yes, please acquire this inholding within the Fish Creek WMA. This area is extremely important for big game and wild trout, and this acquisition will help ensure that the Fish Creek drainage remains undeveloped. A no brainer great idea.
6	E		It's not needed... I can understand acquiring it for the public, but if it is being acquired to "Close off" then forget my support. The general masses have taken stewardship seriously and are taking better care then has been seen ever; so if it is in that direction then opt out.
7	E		I strongly support the purchase of the 158 acre piece from five valleys land trust. I think this is a great piece of property in the heart of the WMA, and would make a great addition to it.
8	E		Since I am unable to attend the Albertain Community Center hearing, October 21, I wish to express my preference for Alternative B in the Fish Wildlife and Parks' proposed acquisition of 148 acres. Any time an acquisition can be made for the better of the whole, it works for most all the aspects of the property. The Fish Wildlife Management Area is an important corridor that affects wildlife movements in the Ninemile/Sixmile/Albertain valleys. Thank you for the public comment period.
9	E	1	I am writing in support of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) purchasing 158 acres from Five Valleys Land Trust as an addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area. The acquisition of this important inholding will provide protection in perpetuity of critical fish and wildlife habitat at a localized and broad-scale level, species conservation, and hunter and angler access to a parcel that previously was inaccessible to the public. With MFWP's current landownership in the drainage and its demonstrated mission to provide for the stewardship of fish, wildlife, and recreational resources for present and future generations, the Agency is the ideal landowner and steward of this parcel for the benefit of the public.
		2	Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
10	E		I support this go for it
11	M	1	1. "There are no mineral rights attached to the property." Is it possible (likely?) that someone might in the future apply for and acquire the rights? Has FWP applied for the rights? (See p. 9 [of EA].)
		2	2. P. 11 says chemical and mechanical methods "may be initiated" yet there is no expected contamination of ground or surface water or adverse affects on people or wildlife. I'm always skeptical when I read such apparently inconsistent claims, especially in the absence of scientific evidence. See also p. 14, 8c & d--"minor" toxicants but no potential hazard. Would you eat the sarvis berries after spraying?
		3	3. P. 14--the closest community is actually Rivulet, not Tarkio. Rivulet is on the state highway department map (11 people, 10 dogs and growing--a 90-acres lot was recently sold).
		4	4. Keep signage (p. 15) to a minimum. How ironic that there are so many Fish Creek State Park signs advocating "leave no trace."
		5	Overall I'd prefer that the area be in state rather than private hands, but some of the statements and claims in the EA leave me scratching my head.
12	M		See pg A-8 for comment #12 (MT Trout Unlimited)
13	M		I am in favor of FWP purchasing the 158 acres from Five Valley Land Trust in the Fish Creek drainage. This purchase of 158 acres will allow public access for recreation. (Retired forester and member of Western MT Trail Riders Association.)

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment
14	M	1	Concur and support acquisition of this land to keep it from being posted as private. (Member Western MT Trail Riders Association.)
		2	I would prefer this be a part of the Fish Creek State Park, so user fees could be charged and a portion go to Mineral County.
15	M	1	I support the purchase of 158 acres of land in Fish Creek WMA from Five Valleys Land Trust.
		2	I attended the meeting on this topic in Alberton on Oct. 21 and heard the opposition from some attendees. It is fair and accurate to say the opposers are concerned mostly with loss of tax base revenue. They want FWP to give them something easy to tax. They need to be looking into development to foster public use of the WMA resources. Look at Rock Creek for example--the shops, lodges, guide services, etc. There's plenty of private land in Fish Creek at the Interstate for development.
16	E	1	In the nearly five years that I've lived in Western Montana, Fish Creek has become a very special place to me. Each summer, my family and friends from all over MT--as well as out-of-state--get together to camp, fish, and recreate in Western MT. For the past few years, our campground of choice has been Big Pine Campground on Fish Creek. Big Pine serves as our headquarters as we fish up and down Fish Creek and enjoy the beaches at the Alberton Gorge area. This is a special place for us, and I believe that the proposed acquisition of the 148-acre parcel on Fish Creek by Montana FWP is in the best interests of preserving and enhancing the things I love about this place.
		2	As a student in UM's Resource Conservation program, as well as a WSTU board member and volunteer for multiple conservation organizations in and around Missoula, I realize the importance of this expansion of the WMA at Fish Creek. This stream and riparian area is very important to sensitive fish species such as westslope cutthroat and bull trout, sport fish species, and terrestrial wildlife. With proper management, including conservation and restoration efforts, this area can continue to support fish, wildlife, and recreationists. I believe that FWP is the appropriate entity to own and manage this parcel. FWP has done good work in this and other areas in the past, and I would like to see their efforts to restore, improve, and protect Fish Creek continue into the future.
		3	I don't get many opportunities to fish and camp with my family and friends. We live far apart and are all busy with our lives. To have a place like Fish Creek that we all treasure and make an effort to meet at is a very special thing. I am all for this acquisition, as it would protect, and likely improve, the experience I have with family and friends at Fish Creek.
17	E		See pg A-10 for comment #17 (WestSlope Chapter, Trout Unlimited)
18	M		I have attended all meetings regarding the Fish Creek Park issues [& was] ~ originally in favor of proposed park plans, anticipating business potential for my Gallery in Missoula AND "trusting" the concerns of Mineral County residents would be respected. In the meeting on the 21st [public meeting for FVLT addition to Fish Creek WMA] it was clearly stated the local citizens are NOT pleased with the current standards for care (of the land) and services provided by their tax dollars for tourists that do not spend money in Mineral County. My business has not seen a benefit from the Fish Creek Park effort. I would like to know more about the options of the landowner of the 80 acres nearby--AND who else would the Five Valleys Land Trust offer to purchase their holdings if FWP declines the option. (Landowner, Petty Creek; business owner, Missoula.)
19	E		See pg A-11 for comment #19 (Missoula Office, Defenders of Wildlife)
20	E	1	As a former Missoula resident and longtime angler of Fish Creek, I support the proposed MT FWP acquisition of land in the Fish Creek drainage. Here's why:
		2	The land acquisition complements and builds off the agency's previous land purchase at Fish Creek from just a few years back.
		3	It is critical to recognize the importance of this area for its wildlife and fishery habitat potential. FWP must not push for any formal development. There is an existing fishing access site 0.3 miles upstream that offers more than adequate public access.
		4	Acquiring another .5 miles of Fish Creek and its associated riparian community for conservation purposes will benefit native fish species, while also providing for needed floodplain function.
		5	The property transfer will have a beneficial impact on Mineral County and surrounding communities. FWP will pay property taxes while preserving fish and wildlife values and protecting the site from streamside development.
		6	I've had great days up there as an angler and observer of nature (big moose!), so please see that this happens.
21	E	1	I would like to comment on the Fish Creek Land Acquisition.

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment
		2	I support the acquisition as the larger a reserved area is the better it functions to protect wildlife and other "wild" amenities. This is particularly true of stream side areas. Any additions to this area is valuable for all concerns.
22	E		I'm writing to garner your support for the purchase by FWP of the 154 acre parcel of land up fish creek from our great friends FVLT. The acquisition of this land will go far to protect this important and sensitive riparian land along an equally important spawning and rearing tributary of the Clark fork. It is important to protect this area from potential private development and damage to the riparian zone and I'm sure that FWP will be great stewards, along with TU and other organizations, to keep this land accessible to the public and healthy for wildlife and fish. Please support this purchase. Thanks
23	E		[SAME as commenter #20, paragraphs 2 through 5
24	E	1	I'm writing you in support of state purchase of 158 acres in the Fish Creek drainage. I sit on the board of Five Valleys Land Trust and realize what a vital project this is to both the wild lands and fishery in that watershed. Perhaps more importantly, on a personal note, Fish Creek is an area I've fished and hunted in for years. I'd like to see this type of activity preserved there for future generations. This truly is an opportunity for the state to step up and to conserve a place and traditions that matter to Montanans like me.
		2	Thank you for your work on this project and your consideration.
25	E		Please do not develop this area so that Fish Creek and associated trout habitat is not negatively impacted!
26	E	1	I strongly support the acquisition of land in the Fish Creek drainage.
		2	I lived in Missoula in grew up hunting and fishing in the Fish Creek and Lolo drainages.
		3	I believe this will be a good purchase for all outdoorsman.
27	E	1	The FWP should not miss an opportunity to add land for public use. The land at Fish Creek would add land that joins existing public land. This can mean more land for the public to access for fishing , hunting and other recreational activities.
		2	I believe that we need to protect this land from development for the protection of a vital natural area and the wildlife found there.
		3	More land spreads usage over a greater area to reduce overuse.
		4	FWP can protect this land from creek side development that endangers native fish.
28	E	1	I support the addition to Fish Creek WMA for the following reasons;
		2	[SAME as commenter #20, paragraphs 2 through 5
29	E		I support the proposed land purchase on Fish Creek. I drive from Stevensville at least once a year to fish on the creek and am aware of the importance of the creek in the Clark Fork system and of the valley as wildlife habitat.
30	E	1	I wanted to write a quick note in support of the possible FWP 158-acre land acquisition along Fish Creek from Five Valleys Land Trust. I believe that this would help protect the habitat that is critical for bull trout and the fishery that has begun to heal from logging industry's work there . Conservation is key to keeping Montana's wildlife on the rebound and thriving. All over the west, we continue to let industry dominate the ecosystem, and our policies with economic profit as the number one decision making criteria. I think the value of a conserved, clean habit for our wildlife and community, is a win-win for our fisheries and our own mental health. When I go out in our wilderness, it rejuvenates me and gives me a positive outlook on the future, and I bring that energy back into my community and home.
		2	Let's keep working together to save it.
31	E		I strongly support the fish or land acquisition and other projects that return critical habitat and access for sportsmen to the public domain.
32	E		As a lifelong trout fisherman and 3rd generation Montanan, I strongly support the FWP acquisition of the Fish Creek property. Most of us fish throughout the state, just as it has been said that you live in MONTANA, not just one of its towns or farms. I travel all over the state fishing, and this region, with its population of cutthroat trout, really needs the protection and development that FWP will give it. Thanks for listening.
33	E		I support the acquisition of this property from FVLT. It makes for a sensible addition to the State Park and WMA as it helps to maintain continuity of management of the overall area if it is left in an undeveloped state. As sale to private owners will surely lead to further fragmentation of the areas resources.

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment
34	E		Thank you for your consideration of the purchase of an additional 158 acres of the Fish Creek corridor. Fish Creek as you are aware is vitally important spawning and rearing habitat for bull trout and cutthroat trout in the beleaguered Clark Fork watershed. This acquisition will further enhance the existing Legacy lands and protect sensitive and biologically diverse riparian habitat from future development that could jeopardize a valuable and dwindling resource. Sound science tells us that connectivity is the key to maintaining healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. This acquisition will give endangered trout and other species an additional boost they need. And we all benefit from our wild lands.
35	E		I support this acquisition and encourage you to pursue it. I believe it is in the best interests of the State of Montana as it will help to preserve vital habitat and protect the floodplain.
36	E	1	Apparently some people have voiced objection to MTFWP's proposed land acquisition on Fish Creek. In our fractious state it probably shouldn't come as a surprise that the proposal has elicited some naysayers. Please don't succumb to irrational objections.
		2	Indisputable conservation benefits accrue from protecting another ? mile of Fish Creek from the development blight that has diminished all the Lower Clark Fork tributaries. Those benefits to riparian vegetation and function and the native fish species dependant upon quality habitat are well documented.
		3	That the property transfer will have a neutral to beneficial impact on Mineral County makes it even harder to understand how objections to this land acquisition can be based on anything other than a rigid ideological basis.
		4	I urge Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to proceed with the proposed Fish Creek land acquisition
37			See pg A-12 for comment #37 (MT Chapter, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers)
38	E		[SAME as commenter #20, paragraphs 2 through 5
39	E	1	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is considering a 158-acre land acquisition along Fish Creek from Five Valleys Land Trust. I strongly support FWP's land acquisition along Fish Creek, and Montana Trout Unlimited's West Slope Chapter's pledge to invest funds toward the property transfer for the following reasons:
		2	[SAME as commenter #20, paragraphs 2 through 5
40	E		As a fourth generation Montanan and third generation fly fisherman I would like the Fish Creek land acquisition to be approved.
41	E	1	I am writing in support of the proposed 158-acre land acquisition along Fish Creek by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) from Five Valleys Land Trust.
		2	There are both conservation and financial incentives for approving this proposal. The area is important for its wildlife and fishery values. Fish Creek is one of the most important westslope cutthroat and bull trout tributaries in the lower Clark Fork River basin, as well as being a crucial winter range for a large variety of wildlife.
		3	The land purchase would provide a needed floodplain function, protect the site from un-needed streamside development and increase the property tax base that FWP pays to Mineral County. This project, that builds on FWP's previous purchase at Fish Creek is a win-win deal for everyone.
		4	Thank you for your consideration.
42	E		I support the Fish Creek land acquisition. It's good for the trout .
43	E		I applaud the efforts of TU Montana to preserve the values of Fish Creek habitat for Cutthroat and Bull trout. This habitat restores and invigorates these populations and is an invaluable recreation resource for hikers, birders, and fishermen. Let's keep as much land and water safe and managed in the public domain as possible and retain the unmatched richness of Montana's natural heritage.
44	E		See pg A-13 for comment #44 (Hellgate Hunters & Anglers)
45	E		I support the land transfer as proposed by Montana Trout Unlimited.

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment
46	E		I am commenting on the Frank Hulme (Five Valley Trust) property in Fish Creek. I have been on the fence about the Fwp buying the said property for \$350000.00 for the 150 acres. One of my concerns is that I think they could use the funds towards what they purchased in 2010. It seems from the meeting I attended in oct. that the main concern with the said property is that Fwp fears that it could be developed because of the neighboring property is being developed. Although the neighboring property had four cabins on it 20 some years ago, when plum creek didn't renew there lease the owners were forced to move the cabins. Mineral county is owned 11 percent private and the other 89 percent is public land. When you look at the fish creek drainage there just is not much private land holdings that can be developed. Most is forest service, Dnrc and now the second largest state park and a wma. Tax base in mineral county is low, even though Fwp pays taxes on the land it's not New tax. It is what plum creek used to pay. I just don't see how this could benefit our county, a county that needs new tax and revenue. A county I live in operate a business in, raise a family in and pay taxes in. I like the idea of keeping land open to the public for recreating in, and keeping wild areas wild for wildlife but I just don't see where the wma and state park is that kind of land, its roaded land and already easily accessible. We have a proposed wilderness area in the great burn that is roadless. I think Fwp would be better off using any funds in taking care of the roads and the weeds. I would like to see Fwp concentrate more on managing our wildlife than on land deals. Or use the funding to buy more land in Missoula county to slow the urban sprawl. Mineral county has a lot of easily accessible public land as it is. So I would be against the purchase of this property at this time.
47	E		I fish on Fish Creek two or three times a year. It is not just great fishing for wild cutthroat trout, I also find it an experience of being in the great outdoors that doesn't happen much anymore even in Montana. I would strongly support placing even more access to this beautiful stream in the public's hands through the proposed land acquisition by FWP. At the same time, I would also support preserving the natural character of the valley by not building any more formal development on the stream. Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.
48	E		I support the proposal to acquire the 158 acre parcel on Fish Creek to protect fish, wildlife, and public interests.
49	E		I SUPPORT FWP acquiring a 158 acre in holding along Fish Creek that includes 1/2 mile of Fish Creek. A private landowner could adversely affect both wintering wildlife and fish habitat with development of this parcel. Acquiring this parcel will create a large continuous block of public land in Fish Creek.
50	E		FWP - you have my full support in purchasing the 158 acre inholding along fish creek. Would love to see a contiguous block of habitat in there without potential landowner issues.
51	E		[SAME as commenter #49]
52	E		I am making comment concern FWP Fish Creek Acquisition from Five Valleys Land Trust. Though I typically prefer that FWP use habitat moneys for conservation easements I see the critical nature of this outright purchase to protect both fish and wildlife habitat from potential development. As a Montana sportsman and outdoor recreationalist I ask that FWP pursue the purchase of this 158 acre parcel with land along Fish Creek.
53	E		Please note my SUPPORT for this proposal to acquire a 158 acre parcel from Five Valleys Land Trust.
54	E		[SAME as commenter #49]
55	E		I am sending this email in support of Fish Creek Acquisition from Five Valleys Land Trust.
56	E		The acquisition of the 158 acres from FVLT would be beneficial for all concerned. It will protect the wildlife corridors that help support our threatened species, the riparian areas and Fish Creek itself. The impact seems to be minimal on allowing more invasive species to be established while opening up more lands to hiking, and hunting. We do not need any improvements or structures on this land. I totally support this land acquisition.
57	E		[SAME as commenter #49]
58	E		I strongly support the acquisition of the inholding at Fish Creek. The consequences of this parcel falling into private ownership could be devastating to winter range and public access.

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment
59	E	1	I am in support of the Five Valleys Land Trust land acquisition at Fish Creek. It will be a beneficial addition to the previous land purchase by FWP at Fish Creek, and will benefit native fish species, and wildlife. I urge the Fish Wildlife and Parks to <u>not</u> push for further land development in this area. Adequate access is already available and overdevelopment at Fish Creek will only serve to harm fish and wildlife values in this area.
		2	I believe that having FWP paying property tax in Mineral County, and safeguarding fish and wildlife habitat will keep this site safe from potentially damaging streamside development will benefit this area as well.
		3	Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this land acquisition.
60	M		I support the purchase of the proposed FVLT addition to Fish Creek WMA. (A user of the Fish Creek area, summer only.)
61	M		Seems like a good idea and am in support of the purchase. Hope you can get it done. (A summer user of the Fish Creek area.)
62	M		The proposed FVLT addition to Fish Creek WMA sounds like a good purchase to me. (I enjoy the Fish Creek area--I don't fish but do ride my ATV on the roads and trails that are open to me!)
63	M		The proposed FVLT addition to Fish Creek WMA sounds like a good purchase to me. (I use the Fish Creek area mostly in the summer.)
64	M		Good addition to the Fish Creek WMA. (Summer user of the Fish Creek area.)
65	E		See pg A-14 for comment #65 (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation)
66	E		See pg A-16 for comment #66 (MT Wildlife Federation)
67	E		See pg A-17 for comment #67 (Flathead Valley Chapter, Trout Unlimited)
68	E		See pg A-18 for comment #68 (Great Burn Study Group)
69	E		See pg A-20 for comment #69 (Five Valleys Land Trust)
70	E		I am in favor of the acquisition of the additional acres to the Fish Creek Management area. This will allow public access to this area that may not be available otherwise. It will also save money for the Mineral County tax payers in the long run. It will also prevent the negative effects to the stream of possible subdivisions and poorly controlled land development.
71	M	1	In regards to Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks proposal to acquire fee title to 158 acres from Five Valleys Land Trust adjacent to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area in Mineral County:
		2	Some statements written in the proposal regarding wildlife in the area are not exactly correct.
		3	Bull trout in the Fish Creek drainage are not included in surveys by the Clark Fork Recovery Unit recovery plan according to Region 1 of the Federal Wildlife Service. The bull trout Clark Fork River Study Recovery Unit designate the following primary core areas: Upper Clark Fork, Rock Creek, Blackfoot, Bitterroot, Lower Clark Fork, Lake Pend Oreille, Priest Lake, Priest River, Flathead Lake, Swan Lake and Hungry Horse Reservation. Secondary core areas are: Clearwater River and Chain of Lakes, West Fork Bitterroot upstream from Painted Rocks and 22 lakes in the Flathead Recovery Subunit. Nowhere is Fish Creek listed. According to their criteria no area is viable with a population fewer than 100 adults because of random probability distribution and genetic risks associated with populations lower than that amount.
		4	According to the survey of XCritical Habitat for Lynx Canadensis, the Fish Creek area is not designated. No habitat in all of Mineral County is noted as such. (see attached map features)
		5	I see no problem acquiring the land. However, since there is no designation for bull trout and Canada lynx preservation (either not being in this area or not enough population to designate as a preservation area) there should be no limitations for public use that is reasonable and prudent.
		6	There is no reason to block outfitters from using the whole Wildlife Management Area, including the 158 acres proposed to be acquired from FVLT. If it is found that an abundance of outfitters would diminish the viability of the ecological environment, then limit them by a numbered amount of special permits. This could also be applied to the public such as is used for fishing on the Smith River.
72	M	1	I believe, without a doubt, FWP would be carrying out the public mandate to acquire the 158 acres in Fish Creek (now owned by N.C.) The monies are available and can't necessarily serve other issues or uses. The land is <u>active</u> with animals (scat & visuals). The creek in that area has extra deep pools and somewhat deeper banks providing exceptional fish habitat.
		2	Thanks to Mr. Thompson for the great job he did at Albertain ([public meeting] Oct. 21st) fielding questions and balancing the discussion. Other concerns were noteworthy; however, the essence of FWP's role, in my estimation, is protecting wilderness and its creatures.
		3	Thanks for your consideration.

Com- men- ter #	Via	Para- graph	Comment
73	E	1	Please find attached comments on Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' potential acquisition of a 158-acre land parcel along Fish Creek from Five Valleys Land Trust.
		2	The comments are submitted by the Shining Mountains Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association and are the views of the local board who represent our 500+ local members,
		3	Thank you for the opportunity to support this acquisition, See pg A-22 for comment #73 (Shining Mountains Chapter, MT Wilderness Association)
74	E		I am strongly supportive of this acquisition for the many reasons stated by many.



Main Office

www.montanatu.org

P.O. Box 7186

Missoula, MT 59807

(406) 543-0054

15 October 2014

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor
Montana FWP
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, Mt 59804

Re: FVLT Fish Creek Acquisition

Dear Randy:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the EA for the proposed FWP acquisition of 158 acres along Fish Creek from Five Valleys Land Trust. Montana Trout Unlimited represents 3,900 conservation-minded anglers, including around 500 in the Missoula area, many who recreate in the Fish Creek drainage. Because of its important recreational fishery values, conservation and restoration of lands in the Fish Creek watershed is a primary priority of Trout Unlimited members in Western Montana.

The proposed acquisition fits squarely within the conservation priorities of Montana TU. We strongly support the proposed acquisition. FWP has done a good job detailing the fishery and wildlife values of the watershed and creek, and this acquisition complements the agency's previous acquisition for the WMA as well as habitat restoration that has occurred in the drainage, some of it in cooperation with TU.

Acquiring another .5 miles of Fish Creek and its associated riparian community for conservation purposes will benefit native fish species, while also providing for needed floodplain function, which has been compromised along some reaches of Fish Creek. Because FWP will be paying property taxes on the property, the acquisition will not adversely affect Mineral County's tax base. Importantly, because Fish Creek is unzoned, this acquisition will prevent the potential for streamside development from private interests, thereby helping preserve fish and wildlife values on the site.

If the acquisition is finalized, we recommend that FWP not provide any formal development on the site. The Forks FAS is only .3 miles upstream, and that should be more than adequate in providing hardened development (improved

parking, outhouses, etc.) to accommodate public access along this reach of Fish Creek.

Thanks again for the opportunity to lend our support for acquisition of this key Fish Creek parcel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bruce Farling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bruce" and last name "Farling" clearly distinguishable.

Bruce Farling
Executive Director

#17



PO Box 7165 • Missoula, Montana 59807-7165 • Phone: 406 546-3005 • E-Mail: WestSlopeChapter.TU@gmail.com • Web: www.WestSlopeTU.org

October 27, 2014

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

RE: FISH CREEK ACQUISITION

Thank you for providing an opportunity for public comment regarding the EA for the proposed FWP acquisition of the parcel along Fish Creek from Five Valleys Land Trust. The WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited (WSTU) is contributing funds to assist with this acquisition; we believe that FWP is the appropriate entity to own and manage these 148 acres.

The WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited represents the interests of 589 members. We are conservationists, anglers, and outdoors enthusiasts. Our mission is to conserve, protect and restore cold-water fisheries in our local area. Expanding the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area by acquiring this parcel would promote our mission by protecting floodplain and habitat for bull trout, westslope cutthroat, and other cold-water fishes. The addition of this parcel would also serve to safeguard important migration/spawning corridors for fish and wildlife by protecting wetland and riparian areas adjacent to Fish Creek.

This acquisition would be an appropriate addition to the WMA and would allow for continued and expanded riparian management and restoration efforts, which WSTU has supported in the past. FWP has performed comprehensive research into the needs of fish and wildlife in this area and are sure to manage it properly. We believe this acquisition would benefit not only fish and wildlife, but also the public. Fish Creek is a large and important tributary to the Clark Fork River, and any effort at habitat conservation, restoration, or improvement on the creek is sure to have far-reaching positive effects.

Thank you again for providing an opportunity for public comment.

The WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited

A-10

#19



Missoula Office
259 West Front St., Suite B | Missoula, Montana 59802 | tel 406.728.8800
www.defenders.org

October 29, 2014

Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area Addition
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
Attn: Sharon Rose
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Dear Ms. Rose,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Environmental Assessment for the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area (FCWMA) addition. We submit the following comments on behalf of our more than 1,200,000 members and supporters nationwide, including more than 5,000 in Montana. Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) is a national non-profit conservation organization founded in 1947 focused on conserving and restoring native species and the habitat upon which they depend.

Defenders supports Alternative B: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' (FWP) proposal to acquire a 148-acre addition to its Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area. Fish Creek is recognized as an important forest carnivore linkage area including Canada lynx, wolverine, grizzly bears, fishers, bull trout, and wolves. Grizzly bear use of the area is expected to increase as southern expansion of the Northern Continental Divide grizzly bear population continues. Adding acres to the FCWMA is particularly beneficial at a time when Montana State Parks is looking to expand the recreational development of Fish Creek State Park. Significant expansion of development in this park could hinder the ability of this region to act as a viable linkage corridor and result in a decline in wildlife security and a degradation of habitat. As we mentioned in our written comments on the Fish Creek State Park Draft Management Plan "we felt that the Park should consider and complement the wildlife and fisheries objectives for the WMA..." While the Park process is not yet complete, FWP's proposal to acquire additional acres for FCWMA is a step in the right direction to safeguarding habitat integrity in this region.

Defenders recognizes that this is an important conservation purchase of habitat that would benefit numerous wildlife species and the habitat they rely on. We support Alternative B. Thank you for taking this step to protect Montana's natural heritage.

Sincerely,

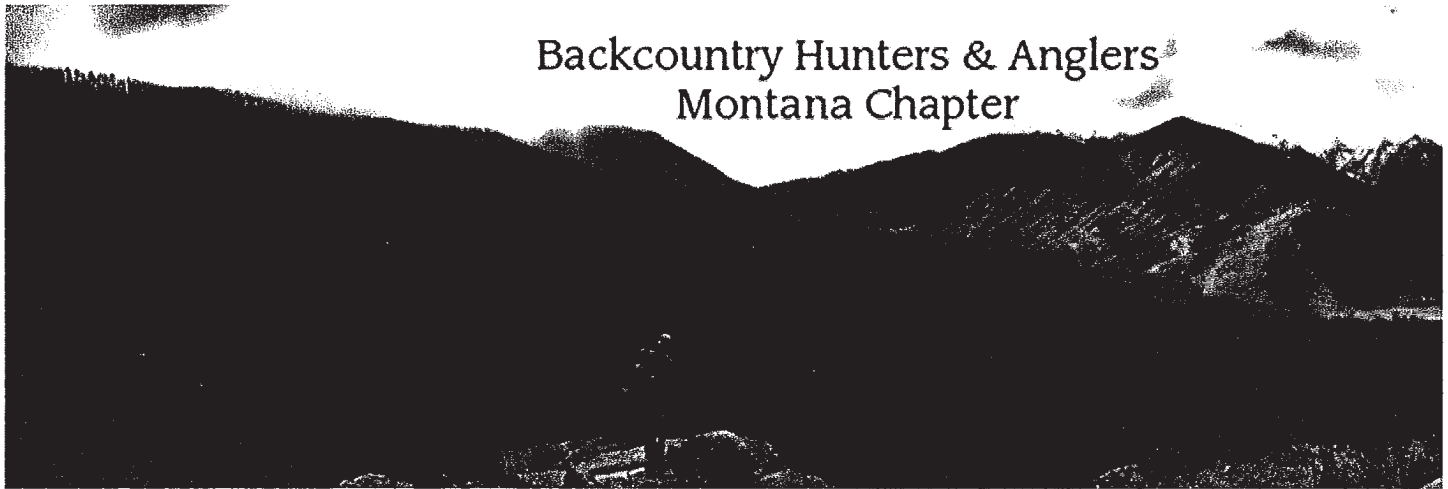
Handwritten signature of Erin Edge.

Erin Edge
Rockies and Plains Representative
Missoula, MT

Handwritten signature of Kylie Paul.

Kylie Paul
Rockies and Plains Representative
Missoula, MT

#37



Backcountry Hunters & Anglers Montana Chapter

1295 Lena Lane
Missoula, MT 59804
October 31, 2014

Sharon Rose
Region 2 FWP
3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula, MT

Montana Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, comprised of nearly 400 Montana hunters and anglers, strongly supports the FWP acquisition of 148 acres from Five Valleys Land Trust in the Fish Creek drainage. Our boots-on-the-ground organization is firmly committed to fostering a public land legacy protecting public lands and waters, as well as access to them.

This acquisition of nearly ½ mile of Fish Creek assures anglers and water enthusiasts access to these waters, as well as assurance their habitat value will be protected and enhanced. Likewise, the hill slopes provide important wildlife winter range, as well as habitat for those species dependent on Ponderosa Pine habitats. This land, if sold to private landowners, could result in disturbance that impacts more than the 148 acres of Fish Creek habitats.

Sincerely,

s/greg munther

Greg Munther, Co-chairman
Montana Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

A-12

#44



November 2, 2014

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Attn: Sharon Rose
Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Re: Proposed FWP acquisition of 158 acres adjacent to the Fish Creek WMA

The Hellgate Hunters and Anglers organization strongly supports the proposed acquisition of 158 acres adjacent to the Fish Creek WMA as proposed in your Draft Environmental Assessment of October 2014. The acquisition of this parcel from Five Valleys Land Trust would enable improved protections to critically important fish and wildlife habitats and provide for expanded and well managed public recreation opportunities in the Fish Creek drainage. Hellgate Hunters and Anglers strongly supported the original acquisition of the Fish Creek WMA, and it views this proposed addition to the WMA as furthering much needed resource protections and offering improved management of recreation opportunities for a diverse public.

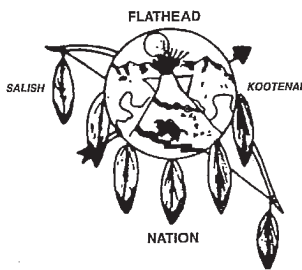
We appreciate the efforts of Region 2 of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Five Valleys Land Trust to bring this outstanding proposal together. We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Casey Hackathorn".

Casey Hackathorn, President
Hellgate Hunters and Anglers

Hellgate Hunters and Anglers
P.O. Box 7792
Missoula, MT 59807

A-13



A Confederation of the Salish,
Pend d' Oreilles
and Kootenai Tribes

THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES OF THE FLATHEAD NATION

P.O. BOX 278
Pablo, Montana 59855
(406) 275-2700
FAX (406) 275-2806
www.cskt.org



A People of Vision

TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Ronald Trahan - Chairman
Carole Lankford - Vice Chair
James V. Matt - Secretary
Len Twoteeth - Treasurer
Vernon S. Finley
Shelly R. Fyant
Leonard W. Gray
Lloyd D. Irvine
Terry L. Pitts
Patty Stevens

October 27, 2014

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor
FWP Region 2
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804


RE: Fish Creek WMA-Proposed Addition

Dear Mr. Arnold,

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Tribes) wish to extend our support for the proposed addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area. The proposed addition would conserve an unprotected 158-acre inholding within the Wildlife Management Area and would provide benefits far beyond the boundaries of the proposed addition. The proposed addition would permanently protect a significant reach of the main stem of Fish Creek from development and habitat degradation and would facilitate future habitat enhancement activities. This stream system supports the largest fluvial bull trout population in the middle Clark Fork River drainage and typically contains more redds than the rest of the tributaries in this region combined. An intact migratory corridor and rearing area in the main stem is vital to the Clark Fork River bull trout population.

While habitat for bull trout within the Clark Fork River drainage has significantly declined over the last one hundred years, the Tribes, Fish, Wildlife and Parks and others are making progress restoring habitat for this important native species. Fish Creek remains the most intact tributary watershed in the middle Clark Fork region and is considered its most valuable stronghold for bull trout and other native fish. Technical representatives from Tribes voted to approve funding for the proposed addition through the Thompson Falls Mitigation Fund because it would contribute to the Tribes' goals of restoring bull trout populations.

Sincerely,
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes



Ronald Trahan, Chairman
Tribal Council

#66

MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

www.montanawildlife.org



*Protecting
Montana's wildlife,
land, waters,
hunting and fishing
heritage since 1936*

Nov. 4, 2014

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Attn: Sharon Rose
Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Dear FWP,

The Montana Wildlife Federation is our state's oldest and largest wildlife conservation organization, with 5,000 members and 19 affiliate clubs throughout the state. We work to ensure abundant wildlife, healthy habitat and public hunting and fishing opportunity.

We strongly support the proposal by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to acquire 158 acres that adjoins the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area in western Montana. This acquisition from the Five Valleys Land Trust will help to protect an important area for wildlife and fish that is ripe for development. It will also help provide expanded recreation opportunities in the Fish Creek drainage.

The area is important for wildlife, as well as for coldwater fish including bull trout. Protecting key habitat like this can help to enhance bull trout by providing spawning habitat. Please move forward with this project that will help Montana's wildlife, native fish species and hunters and anglers.

Sincerely,

Nick Gevock
Conservation Director



Flathead Valley Chapter, Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 638
Kalispell, MT 59901

To: Sharon Rose
Region 2 FWP
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, MT 598044

Re: FVLT Addition to Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area

In 2010, the Flathead Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited expressed support for the original FWP acquisition of the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area. Fish Creek is one of the most important spawning and rearing streams for native westslope cutthroat and bull trout in the middle Clark Fork drainage. Fish Creek supports the largest population of fluvial bull trout in the middle Clark Fork and is an invaluable nursery stream for this threatened species. The stream supports a popular fishery and we consider it to be vital to the survival of native fish species in the Clark Fork. Along with the critical winter range for deer and elk and important habitat for other wildlife species, we recognize the significant role this WMA plays in conserving wildlife in the Clark Fork drainage.

Flathead Valley TU fully supports the proposed acquisition to complement the existing Fish Creek WMA. The addition of the proposed stream and riparian areas will benefit the existing protected areas and improve the overall effectiveness of the WMA. Protection from further development on lower Fish Creek is one of the most important aspects of this WMA. As angling pressure has already doubled since the establishment of the Fish Creek WMA, we ask that FWP refrain from overdevelopment along this stretch of the creek as recently proposed with the expansion and addition of developed camping and access sites. Fish Creek already supports a healthy fishery and more development would only serve to harm the very species that this WMA is meant to protect.

We recommend that FWP move forward with the acquisition of the additional 158-acre parcel to be added to the Fish Creek WMA in order to preserve and protect this critical area and our native fish for future generations. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Larry Timchak, President
Flathead Valley Trout Unlimited



#68

1434 Jackson Street
Missoula, Montana 59802
PHONE 406 240-9901
FAX 406 829 1501

November 5, 2014

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor
FWP Region 2
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804

RE: Fish Creek WMA-Proposed Addition

Dear Mr. Arnold,

The Great Burn Study Group (GBSG) Board of Directors and staff wish to extend our support for the proposed MTFWP acquisition of an additional 158 acres to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA). GBSG is a local conservation organization based in Missoula. GBSG's mission is to conserve the wild and remote character of the northern Bitterroot Mountains along the Montana/Idaho stateline. Fish Creek is of great importance to GBSG, not only because of its proximity to the proposed Great Burn Wilderness, but also because of the drainage's local and regional significance for wildlife and native fisheries.

As you know, national, regional state government wildlife agencies and other organizations have identified the Fish Creek area as a high quality wildlife corridor and part of a regional wildlife movement zone linking the Selway-Bitterroot to the Northern Continental Divide and Selkirk-Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems. Locally, Fish Creek is part of a wildlife linkage zone between the Ninemile Valley and the Fish Creek/Petty Creek area. In addition, a well-known wildlife movement area exists between Burdette Creek and the proposed Great Burn Wilderness which provides passage for elk moving to winter range. Also, the Fish Creek drainage is a stronghold for genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout and supports the largest fluvial bull trout population in the middle Clark Fork drainage.

GBSG supports FWP's proposal to acquire the additional acreage for the WMA. The proposed addition would provide benefits far beyond its boundaries by permanently protecting a half mile of the main stem of Fish Creek and its riparian area from habitat degradation. We have further comments and concerns below.

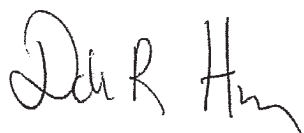
We urge FWP to place priority on wildlife management for the Fish Creek WMA and the addition, and therefore we recommend that FWP not provide any formal development on the site. There is a developed area nearby (Forks) which should offer all the facilities needed to accommodate the public in this area.

A-18

Members of GBSG's board and staff have served on the Mineral County Resource Advisory Committee since its inception, and also own property in Mineral County. We support this acquisition as it will enable public access which we know to be an important issue for county residents. If the property were sold to a private individual, this access would be at stake.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. This additional acquisition represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect the quality of life in western Montana and to maintain the core values that make western Montana such a special place.

Sincerely,



Dale Harris
Executive Director



Beverly Dupree
Policy and Field Studies Director

cc: Tim Garcia, Lolo National Forest Supervisor, USFS
Tawyna Brummett, Ranger, Superior Ranger District, USFS
Chad Benson, Ranger, Ninemile Ranger District, USFS
Mike Thompson, Wildlife Biologist, MTFWP
Mineral County Commission
Pelah Hoyt, Five Valleys Land Trust



#69

120 Hickory Street, Suite B • Missoula, MT 59801
(406) 549-0755 • Email: office@fvlt.org • www.fvlt.org

November 6, 2014

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor
FWP Region 2
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804

RE: Fish Creek WMA-Proposed Addition

Dear Mr. Arnold,

Five Valleys Land Trust supports the proposed addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area (Fish Creek WMA). The proposed addition would conserve important wildlife habitat, provide public access, and improve Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP) management of the Fish Creek WMA.

When FWP acquired ~28,000 acres of Montana Legacy Project land to establish the Fish Creek WMA several key private inholdings could not be included in that conservation effort, and their unprotected status threatens the connectivity that is so essential for bull trout recovery. The proposed addition would permanently protect a significant reach of Fish Creek from habitat degradation and facilitate future enhancement activities. Outside of the Blackfoot, Fish Creek is the most important stronghold for bull trout in the middle Clark Fork region and many of the bull trout found in the Clark Fork are reared in Fish Creek. This stream system typically contains more redds than the rest of the tributaries in this region combined. An intact migratory corridor and rearing area in the main stem is vital to this bull trout population. In addition to these fisheries values, the riparian habitat on the proposed addition provides habitat for moose, neotropical songbirds and owls. The addition would also allow FWP to effectively manage the property's winter range to benefit Fish Creek's struggling elk herd. Providing well-managed public access to these exceptional conservation values will benefit the citizens of Montana.

In 2011 and again in 2014, FWP requested Five Valleys Land Trust's (Five Valleys) assistance in acquiring this property in order to protect its conservation values. Five Valleys also heard strong support for the acquisition from a wide range of community members including residents of Mineral County and Missoula area hunters and anglers who are avid users of the Fish Creek WMA. Five Valleys purchased the property this fall as an interim owner until the property could be transferred to the appropriate permanent conservation owner. From our

Board of Directors:

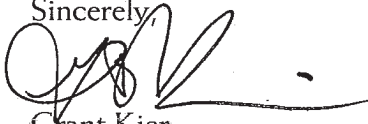
A-20

Lucy Beighle • Sean Benton • Jim Brown • Ken Burd • Jim Cusker • Mary Lynn Eiseman • Julie Gardner • Denny Iverson
Kathy McAllister • Jeffrey Roth • Amber Sherrill • Don Sokoloski • Chuck Tribe • Jim Valeo • Pam Volkmann



earliest partnership at Kelly Island in the 1970s to the conservation of Mount Jumbo, the Alberton Gorge, Milltown Dam, and many other Montana treasures, Five Valleys has worked together with FWP for decades to achieve conservation goals shared by all Montanans. Montana FWP's acquisition of this property will improve the Fish Creek WMA and strengthen our shared legacy of cooperation to conserve Montana's fish and wildlife heritage. We are grateful for this opportunity to work together again, and look forward to future opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Kier', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Grant Kier
Executive Director

#73

Missoula, MT
November 6, 2014

Sharon Rose
Region 2 FWP
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, MT

Dear Ms. Rose:

The Shining Mountains Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association supports the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks acquiring 148 acres for addition to the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Our members include hikers, horsemen, hunters, anglers, and nature enthusiasts who enjoy the front country in Fish Creek as well as the Great Burn recommended wilderness higher up the drainage.

Keeping the approaches to recommended wilderness largely natural benefits the experience of folks using the Fish Creek drainage as their wilderness portal.

We're thankful that the public will gain access to this property, which includes one-half mile of the mainstem of Fish Creek.

We're pleased that the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks will be managing this property for its value to fish and wildlife.

Sincerely,

Daphne Herling
President, Shining Mountains Chapter Montana Wilderness Association

A-22

Appendix B
FVLT (Hulme) Addition to Fish Creek WMA Public Meeting
October 21, 2014; Alberton Community Center, 6:30 p.m.

Oral Testimony (4 people)

1a. Harvey Mead

- Opposed to the acquisition
- FWP has plenty to manage now
- FWP is just locking it up
- Development of the land would help the Mineral County tax base
- You could spend your money more widely

2a. Roman Zylawy

- Concerned that acquisition money should go toward wildlife to manage . . .
- Haven't seen FWP put money where their mouth is on the roads
- State Park and Alberton Gorge has not been moving forward
- Don't buy more land until you manage what you've got

3. Ed Larson

- Support the acquisition 100%
- Consider myself a Fish Creeker; I pay taxes in Mineral County
- Upset by more posted signs
- Having hunted in that country, it appalls me that the country is being shut off
- It's good to hear the other side (i.e., loss of county revenue); there are still grazing leases on DNRC land there, which support the public schools.
- Like the idea of having the corridor that wildlife can pass through
- I'm a neighbor to that property; we have moose, turkey, whitetails.
- Concerned about the knapweed; have purchased biocontrol agents to use on my property.

4a. Dustin Tulberg

- Need to build more roads and cut more trees to make room for ATVs. Open more roads to motorized use.
- Don't force people to drive very far
- Opposed to the purchase

Written Testimony (6 people, including 3 who also gave oral testimony)

1b. Harvey Mead (Alberton)

- I am against the purchase of this land
- You can't manage the land you have
- You could spend your money on road maintenance, weed control
- You are taking away future tax base for the county.
- More access closed to public.

2b. Roman Zylawy (Alberton; Mineral County Commissioner)

- Rather than purchase more land, save your money to pay for: 1) Law enforcement [at] State Park; 2) Maintaining your current land acquisition, spray weeds, toilet paper in outhouses, etc.; 3) a potential tax revenue loss for the county; future homes and improvements instead of stagnant state property.
- And who will pay for Fish Creek Road maintenance? FWP? Forest Service? Who?
- Also, we would like to see electric power in place for Hole in the Wall Lodge as well as other residents needing it.

4b. Dustin Tulberg (Missoula; member Western MT Trail Riders)

- Why don't we build more roads for ATV? Can we go [unreadable word] the ATV trails? Can maintain bikers [go] on the ATV trails? Can we have less wolf and grizzly bears in national forest? Why don't we build more roads in Fish Creek? We should cut trees down, open more roads. We need to make more money to build roads.

5. John S. Giffin (Alberton)

- I'm against purchasing this land by the FWP. I don't believe FWP should use the money to buy more land and closing it off. I believe FWP can't maintain the land they already have locked up. You can't use 4-wheelers, snowmobiles or anything on this land. What's the use of owning any of these toys if you don't have any place to use them. No to closing more land off. I was born and raised in this area and I'm 66 years old and all the country I've hunted and hiked around is closed off. I just think FWP could put to use this money in different priority through maintaining what they already have.

6. Chris Sielger ((Huson)

- I support Alternative B [FWP acquires the land]
- The acquisition has significant value in its connectivity to the surrounding WMA and adjacent Fish Creek State Park. If the proposed purchase area were to be developed by the private sector as a residential development property, it would significantly disturb the big game range and the fishing/ rafting potential of Fish Creek.

7. Roger Tulberg (Missoula; member Western MT Trail Riders)
- I am in support of the purchase of the FVLT addition to the Fish Creek WMA with a big suggestion attached. The WMA already surrounds the land, so purchasing the small 148-acre piece is really a “no brainer.” What I want is a change in the WMA so we can have better access to roads in place for ATV usage.
 - Adding the small piece will make little difference to anything in the big picture. What will make a difference is opening up the State Trust and WMA so we can use it. It is our land and we want to have access to it. Don’t shut it down.
 - If the plan does not change for the WMA, I would oppose the purchase for sure. We have the money set aside so just buy it.